

SUBJECT: Task force on state employee child care

COMMITTEE: Human Service: committee substitute recommended

VOTE: 8 ayes--Barton, Cooper, Vowell, Blair, R. Cuellar,
Earley, Larry, Waterfield

0 nays

1 absent--Gruesendorf

WITNESSES: For--Lane Zively, executive director, Texas Public
Employees Association; Wakie Martin, Texas State
Employees Union; Joe Frost, University of Texas
professor, early childhood education; Jeaneen McMaster,
Texas Women's Political Caucus.

Against--None

DIGEST: CSHB 1060 would establish a task force to study options
for providing child-care services to state employees
and to set up a pilot child-care program.

The task force would be comprised of 10 members,
representing state agencies, state employees and child
education groups. The chair would be appointed by the
governor. The task force could request assistance from
a state agency and accept outside sources for funding.

The task force would report to the Legislature on the
feasibility of providing different types of child-care
services to state employees. The cost of the study
would be paid by the agencies represented on the task
force.

The task force would design and establish a pilot
program to provide child-care services to state
employees with preschool children. Employees
participating in the pilot program would be required to
pay for the child-care services.

The pilot program would be established at no more than
five sites. The task force would select no more than
three cities with a population of 300,000 or more as
sites for the pilot program. The task force would also
select not more than two counties with a population of

less than 100,000 in which to establish a pilot program.

The task force could use buildings that are state owned or leased or that could be sub-leased from the state for the pilot program. The buildings would be leased at market rates to tenants who would provide the child-care services. The tenant would be required to obtain a license to provide child-care services.

Each state agency with access to the child-care services provided by the pilot program would be required to submit a report evaluating the pilot program to the task force no later than Oct. 31, 1990. The task force would make a complete report of its findings, recommendations and drafts of proposed legislation to the 72nd Legislature on the day it convenes. The task force would also be required to distribute an executive summary of the report to each member of the House and Senate.

SUPPORTERS
SAY:

This bill would provide much-needed data on a concern of most Texas parents: providing quality and dependable care for their children. Approximately half the mothers in the state work outside the home, making the need for child-care enormous. This bill is pro-family and faces the economic reality that in many cases both parents must work to provide economic stability for the family.

The state would not actually be providing the care, just facilitating the provision of day-care services for its employees. State employees would be provided with child-care services that were convenient and dependable. The services could offer the employee the flexibility needed to work overtime and on holidays, flexibility that regular child-care services do not provide. Private concerns would provide the child-care in unused areas of state buildings that the state would lease.

Currently about 2,500 businesses in the country and about 200 in Texas provide child-care services for their employees' use. Companies such as IBM, Proctor and Gamble, AT&T and Polaroid provide such services because it makes good business sense. On-site child-care or child-care that is near a parent's job helps reduce absenteeism, improves morale, provides higher employee productivity and lowers turn-over rates. Companies find that by providing child-care

services they can attract and keep high quality employees. Other states have successfully run such programs.

The need for child-care services will only increase in the coming years. This is the time to study and establish programs on child-care to determine their effectiveness. The state as an employer can only stand to gain from such study.

The benefits of these programs outweigh the costs. The children themselves benefit. Studies have shown that each dollar spent on early childhood programs and education is paid back to society two-and-a-half times. Such programs reduce the need for special education and care and improve a child's chances for academic success. Early childhood programs also improve a child's earning potential as an adult.

OPPONENTS
SAY:

The state should not be in the business of providing child-care services to anyone. Providing child-care services is best left up to private concerns that are better equipped for this role. Establishing studies and pilot programs are just the first step toward full-scale state involvement in an area in which the state has no business getting involved.

Providing child-care services would give some employees a benefit but not others. The state pays employees for their work, and the employees should be able to find child-care on their own. The state should concern itself with assistance for people who can not help themselves, not people who are earning a good living.

This bill would provide a legal basis for spending the state's limited resources. Legislation should not be passed at this time that would cost the state any additional money. Study projects have a way of escalating into demands for funds.

NOTES:

The committee substitute would establish a task force to study the child-care services; the original bill did not. The committee substitute would require the task force to establish the pilot program for child-care; the original bill would have required the State Purchasing and General Services commission to establish the pilot program.

The original bill would have expired on Sept. 1, 1989. The committee substitute would expire on Sept. 1, 1991.

The committee substitute would require the pilot program to be established by Sept. 1, 1988; the original bill had no such timetable.

SB 934 by Barrientos (Richardson), which is similar to the original version of HB 1060, passed in the Senate by voice vote on April 22, was reported by the State Affairs Committee on May 6 and is pending in the Calendars Committee.